

VZCZCXRO9984
PP RUEHCHI RUEHDT RUEHNN
DE RUEHHM #1220 3461517
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 121517Z DEC 07
FM AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH CITY
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3425
INFO RUEHHI/AMEMBASSY HANOI PRIORITY 2347
RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUEHHM/AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH CITY 3644

UNCLAS HO CHI MINH CITY 001220

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/MLS AND DRL/AWH

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [ELAB](#) [SOCI](#) [VM](#)
SUBJECT: LABOR ACTIVISTS CONVICTED

Summary

1. (SBU) Four United Workers-Farmers Organization (UWFO) activists were convicted on December 10 for "abusing democracy and freedom rights to infringe upon the interests of the State and the legitimate rights and interests of organizations and citizens." The activists received sentences from one to four years in prison for disseminating information critical of the GVN's labor and land use policies. Several other dissident trials will take place over the next few weeks, marking, for the most part, the final round of convictions for those arrested since the GVN's crackdown on pro-democracy groups began in late 2006. End Summary.

2. (U) On December 10, Vietnam press reported the convictions of four labor activists associated with the United Worker's Farm Organization (UWFO), a group of labor organizers formed in late 2006 with ties to the People's Democratic Party (PDP). UWFO's primary activities have included working with factory workers and dispossessed farmers in 2006 to enlist grassroots support for the democracy movement. The People's Court in southern Dong Nai province convicted the four for "abusing democracy and freedom rights to infringe upon the interests of the State and the legitimate rights and interests of organizations and citizens" under Article 258 of Vietnam's Penal Code. The court meted out prison sentences of four years and six months to Mr. Doan Van Dien, three years to Ms. Tran Thi Le Hong and one year and six months to Doan Huy Chuong (Doan Van Dien's son). Another activist, Mr. Phung Quang Quyen, was also sentenced to one year and six months in prison. An earlier group of UWFO leaders had been sentenced in May 2007.

Activities Centered on Land Rights

3. (SBU) Vietnamese press reports say that Dien, Hong and Quyen were collecting information on land rights disputes, posting the information on Internet, and sending it to U.S.-based support groups in order to "slander the Vietnamese State." The reports also say Chuong "pretended to be a worker" when he accused the GVN of "repressing workers and arresting demonstrators" during interviews with Radio Free Asia and Hoa Mai Radio. Reports also accuse Dien of preparing and distributing anti-GVN leaflets during last year's APEC meeting in Hanoi. All three were arrested in Dong Nai and have remained in detention since November 15, 2006, shortly after the launch of the organization.

Activist Defended Himself

4. (SBU) ConGen contacts present at the trial say Dien, a former member of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) and a Mennonite preacher, represented himself, Hoang and Chuong at the trial. In his defense, Dien told the judge what he did was not wrong and that he acted to "help people in desperate

situations." A court-appointed lawyer represented Phung Quang Quyen.

¶5. (SBU) ConGen's contacts say the court produced leaflets the group had allegedly authored calling for factory strikes to demand better benefits and salaries as well as land rights dispute documents. The Court accused Dien of disseminating the leaflets in Dong Nai province and at one of HCMC's industrial parks. The court also said Dien and the others sent land dispute documents to the pro-democracy Lac Hong Party Alliance group in the U.S.

Connections with other Dissidents

¶6. (SBU) The Lac Hong Party Alliance was formed in January 2006 by the Vietnam Progression Party (Father Nguyen Van Ly's group) and "For the People," a US-based political group led by Nguyen Cong Bang. "For the People" runs the Hoa Mai group, which advocates for human rights in Vietnam via their website and radio services in the U.S., Europe and Australia.

Comment

¶7. (SBU) This trial is one in a long series of convictions for the PDP and other democracy activists arrested since the GVN crackdown on dissent began in late 2006. Post is attempting to confirm details regarding several other trials of detained dissidents scheduled to take place over the next few weeks. These convictions are the final nail in coffin for the fledgling democracy movement that existed in Vietnam prior to the GVN crackdown. Most of the leaders of these movements are now imprisoned, have fled abroad, are in hiding or are under house arrest. End Comment.

¶8. (U) This cable was coordinated with Embassy Hanoi.

FAIRFAX